

The Rotunda
Eitzen Park (Fairgrounds)
Hermann
Gasconade County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-254

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

THE ROTUNDA

HABS No. MO-254

Location: Eitzen Park (Fairgrounds), Hermann, Gasconade County, Missouri.

Present Owner: City of Hermann.

Present Use: Displays, especially those associated with the annual "Maifest."

Significance: The Rotunda was designed for the Gasconade County Agricultural Association by a local architect, Edward Robyn. An adaptation of the circular barn, the octagonal display building has a double cupola roof resting on a complicated raftering system designed by another local architect, Johannes Bohlken. The Rotunda became the property of the City of Hermann when the city purchased the Fairgrounds for use as a city park.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: 1861-66. In 1861, the Gasconade County Agricultural Association paid \$400.00 for 6.11 acres to be used as a Fairgrounds. The earliest County Tax Records available are those of 1866, which record an assessed valuation of \$1,000.00 for this property. This increase in valuation probably reflects the construction of the Rotunda and other display buildings. A view of Hermann from the Missouri River by A. Rutgers dated 1869 includes the Rotunda.
2. Architect: Edward Robyn (Interview)
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Rotunda is built in Eitzen Park, Hermann, Gasconade County, Missouri. This property was formerly part of Section 35, Township 46, Range 5 west and was called the Fairgrounds. The following references to the title of this property are found in the Gasconade County, Missouri Deed Books.

1861 Warranty Deed Jacob D. Scheifer and Ellenune his wife to Mathias Wutherick (Pres.), George Klinge (Vice-Pres.), William Wesselhoft (Sec.), and John William Kielmann (Treas.), as a board of Dir. for the Gasconade County Agricultural Association
Date signed: June 25, 1860
Date filed: January 9, 1861
Date recorded: January 14, 1861
Book N Page 567 Consideration: \$400.00

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1923 Quit-Claim Deed Agricultural Association of Gasconade
County to City of Hermann
Date signed: March 21, 1923
Date filed: March 22, 1923
Book 50 Page 602
Consideration: \$4,000.00

4. Original Plans: No original plans or accounts of the construction of the Rotunda have been located. The earliest view of the building is in Rutgers' view of Hermann from the Missouri River of 1869. It is also included in Robyn's view of the town from the Missouri River dated 1877.
5. Alterations and Additions: Soon after the construction of the Rotunda, it became clear that the many posts supporting the roof obstructed the view of displays set up in the building. Johannes Bohlken, a local architect, redesigned the raftering to focus the weight of the roof on a single center post.

The original shingle roof has been covered with a corrugated metal roof.

The dormer at the rear of the building may be an addition.

A shed has been added to the rear of the building for dressing rooms.

In 1951, the Brush and Palette Club restored the Rotunda. The windows and door were replaced with parts found at a St. Louis salvage company, and the raftering was reinforced with tie rods. The shutters and shutter hardware may be original.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Edward Robyn first visited Hermann during its early settlement with his two brothers. Finding their artistic talents useless in the pioneer town, they returned to St. Louis. There William Robyn established the St. Louis Symphony Society. Edward Robyn later returned to Hermann where he worked as an artist and architect for many years. Johannes Bohlken was trained as a shipbuilder. After he settled in Hermann, he transferred his talents to architecture. Although the Rotunda is one of the few buildings that these early Hermann architects can be associated with, many other buildings in the town may have been designed by them.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: County Tax Records, 1854, 1866-1900, in vault on second floor, Gasconade County Courthouse, East First Street between Market and Schiller Streets, Hermann, Missouri (key in care of County Clerk).

Deeds, Office of the County Recorder, Gasconade County Courthouse, East First Street between Market and Schiller Streets, Hermann, Missouri.

Interview, Mrs. Anna Hesse, August 14, 1975 name of architects, description of property.

Files of the State Planning and Survey Office, Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, Missouri (preliminary work on National Register Nomination).

1869 bird's eye view of Hermann from the Missouri River, drawn by A. Rutgers, Pommer-Gentner House, 108 Market Street, Hermann, Missouri (owned by The Brush and Palette Club, 411 Market Street, Hermann, Missouri).

1877 panoramic view of Hermann from the Missouri River, lithograph Edward Robyn, Missouri Historical Society, Jefferson Building, St. Louis 12, Missouri (photograph of this lithograph in the Hermann Historic District files State Planning and Survey Office, Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, Missouri).

2. Secondary and published sources: Hesse, Anna, Centenarians of Brick, Wood, and Stone, Hermann, Missouri, (Anna Hesse, 1969).

The History of Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Crawford, and Gasconade Counties, (Goodspeed Publishing Co., Chicago, Ill.: 1888).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The Rotunda is a single-story, open plan, octagonal building with a steeply pitched double cupola roof.
2. Condition of Fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all Dimensions: Octagonal plan, 52'11" wide.
2. Foundations: Continuous stone walls.
3. Wall construction: Walls are 12½" kiln-dried brick walls, laid in common bond. The interior surface is painted white; the exterior surface is unpainted.
4. Structural System: Brick perimeter bearing walls with a composite roof truss keyed to a 11½" square central column which is chamfered into an octagonal section. Wooden rafter plates along the top of the brick walls support the 4" square rafters (spaced 32" on center).

and the 3" x 14" beams which are attached to the sides of the column by wooden bearing plates. A number of the members have empty mortises indicating a change in the truss configuration.

5. Porches: An enclosed, wooden frame shed has been added onto the east wall.
6. Chimneys: None.
7. Openings:
 - a. Windows: A window is centered on each face of the building (with the exception of the two faces with doors). Each window is a rectangular six-over-six double hung window, with a semi-circular head framed by a brick arch. The window casings and sashes are painted white; the shutters are painted green.
 - b. Doors and Doorways: There are two entrances into the building. The main entrance (on the west wall) has contemporary six-panel double doors. The rear doors (on the east wall, enclosed by the shed addition) are five panel doors. Both doorways have fanlights.
8. Roof: Steeply pitched conical roof with a stacked double cupola, which forms two clearstories. These are sided with white clapboards; the roofs are corrugated metal painted green.
Dormers: One gabled dormer on the east face of the roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The front doorway leads directly into the single octagonal space. At present, rows of movable chairs face a temporary stage. The shed addition on the east is being used as a dressing room behind the stage.
2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: 2½" tongue-and-groove boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Interior walls are the brick walls painted white. There is no finished ceiling--the trusswork and the underside of the roof are exposed.
5. Doorways and Doors: No interior doors.
6. Trim: Windows and doors all have flat casings.
7. Hardware: Contemporary mortise passage locksets.
8. Mechanical Systems: Lighting and sound equipment for the stage, forced air heating unit, and electric fans in the east wall of the lower clearstory are all recent additions. There is no interior plumbing.

D. Site:

1. General Setting: The Rotunda faces west and is located within the town park.
2. Outbuildings: None.

Prepared by: Nanette M. Linderer	and	Clayton B. Fraser
Project Historian		Project Supervisor
Summer 1975		Summer 1975

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Hermann, Missouri, project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey, under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with cooperation of Historic Hermann, Incorporated. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1975 by Clayton B. Fraser (HABS Washington Office), Project Supervisor; Nanette M. Linderer (University of Missouri at Columbia), Project Historian; and Student Architects Edward C. Freeman (Arizona State University), Jean C. Parker (Columbia University), and Donnie G. Seale (University of Florida). The photographs were taken in April and May 1983, by HABS/HAER Photographer Jet Lowe.